

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1068

By Favors

A RESOLUTION to recognize and commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Howard High School Class of 1960 and its role in the Chattanooga Sit-In Movement.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that members of this General Assembly should honor and commemorate those estimable individuals who advanced the ongoing struggle for civil and human rights and promoted racial equality in our State; and

WHEREAS, the Howard High School Class of 1960 is certainly one such group of outstanding individuals who gallantly led the Chattanooga Sit-In Movement, the historical campaign which began on February 19, 1960 as part of a non-violent, direct action campaign to end racial segregation throughout the Scenic City; and

WHEREAS, prior to the Chattanooga Sit-In Movement, Jim Crowism pervaded all aspects of life in Chattanooga and throughout the South with a pattern of racial exclusiveness prevailing in Chattanooga's schools and public facilities, including restrooms, waiting areas, snack counters, transportation terminals, libraries, theaters, hotels, restaurants, and neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, under the astute leadership of Howard High School students Andrew Smith, Robert Taylor, and Robert Winston, one hundred young activists united to take a stand and fundamentally change the social order of the day; and

WHEREAS, on February 19, 1960, the Howard High School seniors launched the first, and likely only, protest in the United States organized by high school students, and, with their philosophy of quiet strength, began to challenge the institutionalized policy of segregation by attempting to desegregate the McClellan Company Store lunch counter; and

WHEREAS, while the Chattanooga Sit-In Movement was notable for its emphasis on disciplined nonviolence, its demonstrators were met with bitter violence and unjust arrests; and

WHEREAS, however, overtime, the students' civil disobedience loosened Jim Crow's oppressive hold on this tremendous city, and the good people of Chattanooga began to recognize the moral repugnance of segregation; by August of 1960, "Whites Only" signs had been removed from public restrooms, water fountains, and buses, and African-Americans were finally permitted to eat at Chattanooga's downtown lunch counters; and

WHEREAS, while the struggle was grueling and protracted, the courage, character, and discipline required of the Howard High School students transformed those teenagers into community leaders of whom we can all be proud, and many of the student participants who acted with calm defiance in Chattanooga would later gain local and national prominence; and

WHEREAS, in honor of this remarkable civil rights campaign and the valiant efforts of the Howard High School students, an award winning document, "No Incident, No Service," was created in 2003; and

WHEREAS, with a belief that challenging the despicable bigotry and racial violence that plagued Chattanooga would stimulate their great city to grow toward the maturity of a truly just and equitable society, these brave young men and women struck an immutable blow against segregation and the perpetuation of racial inequality, inspired freedom-loving people throughout the world, and fueled a new quest for justice among Americans so long aggrieved; and

WHEREAS, the preservation of our civil rights and our liberties is essential to the well-being of a democratic society, and the dedication shown to this cause and exemplified by the Howard High School Class of 1960 merits special recognition; and

WHEREAS, these individuals have demonstrated the spirit and commitment that this General Assembly most admires, and we are proud to pause in our deliberations to recognize their heroic efforts on the fiftieth anniversary of this landmark event; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we recognize and commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the

Chattanooga Sit-In Movement and honor the seminal group of students from Howard High School for their unparalleled pursuit of justice and equality for all Tennesseans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.